Unit .30

Session .01

Proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus

Scripture

Acts 8:26-40

26 An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip: "Get up and
go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem
to Gaza." (This is the desert road.) **27** So he got up
and went. There was an Ethiopian man, a eunuch and
high official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who
was in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to
worship in Jerusalem **28** and was sitting in his chariot
on his way home, reading the prophet Isaiah aloud.
29 The Spirit told Philip, "Go and join that chariot."
30 When Philip ran up to it, he heard him reading
the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand
what you're reading?" **31** "How can I," he said, "unless
someone guides me?" So he invited Philip to come up
and sit with him. **32** Now the Scripture passage he
was reading was this: **He was led like a sheep to the
slaughter, and as a lamb is silent before its shearer, so
he does not open his mouth. 33 In his humiliation
justice was denied him. Who will describe his
generation? For his life is taken from the earth.**
34 The eunuch said to Philip, "I ask you, who is the
prophet saying this about—himself or someone else?"
35 Philip proceeded to tell him the good news about
Jesus, beginning with that Scripture. **36** As they were
traveling down the road, they came to some water. The
eunuch said, "Look, there's water. What would keep
me from being baptized?" **38** So he ordered the chariot
to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch went down
into the water, and he baptized him. **39** When they
came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried
Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him any longer
but went on his way rejoicing. **40** Philip appeared in
Azotus, and he was traveling and preaching the gospel
in all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Intro Options

Main Point:
The Holy Spirit leads us to proclaim the gospel so that others might be saved.

Option 1

Tell your students to imagine they are part of the first crew to visit Mars. Because of limited space, they may only take one item that can fit in a suitcase. What would they take? Let students share their answers.

Repeat the exercise, this time imagining you are going on vacation for two weeks. What would they take? Why?

Repeat the exercise one more time. Have them imagine they are going to witness to people who'd never heard of Jesus. They are allowed to take one item to use as a teaching tool. What do they choose? Why?

Commend any good ideas the students have. How many students chose to bring a Bible with them as they witnessed? Share that in today's lesson, they'll see Philip used the Scriptures as a tool to teach the eunuch. In the same way, we should strive to be faithful to show Jesus through Scripture, since all the Scriptures are about him.

Option 2

Give each student two sheets of paper and a writing utensil. On one sheet of paper, they should come up with a code key. For instance, they might replace every letter of the alphabet with a shape, line, or number of dots. On the second sheet of paper, they should write a message in their new code. They might want to make it a familiar message: maybe a famous scripture, saying, or movie line.

Have them trade their message sheets with one other person to see if they can crack each other's code and decode the message. They can offer hints to one another ("this symbol is an e"), but try to get the other person to guess it. After a bit, have them also give each other the code key. Let students finish decoding the message.

Afterward, debrief. How many people were able to figure out the code on their own? Once they got the key, was it easier? Was it still difficult? Explain that in today's lesson, we'll see an Ethiopian eunuch who found reading Isaiah much like reading an encoded message: he couldn't make heads or tails of it until Philip "decoded" it to him with the "code key" of Jesus. We'll see that Jesus is the "code key" for all the scriptures.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Acts 8:26-29.

Athletics plays a major part of many students' lives during the school year. When a team is formed, players and a coach are required. The coach teaches fundamentals and draws up the plays, then it's up to the players to follow through on the plan.

- **When in your life have you experienced success by following someone else's plan and instructions?**

When it comes to living by faith, this same principle applies. God has, through His Word, taught us the things we know, and He's drawn up the plays which we're now called to follow through on. However, many players in the game sometimes choose not to follow through on God's plans. Instead we often run our own plays. We all know that, if the players on the field, the team would lose every time. Yet, for some reason, we sometimes fail to see that this same principle applies in our spiritual lives. If we want to experience victory, we must follow through on the Lord's plans.

When God delivered His instructions to Philip, He did so with authority and a sense of urgency. His commands in this passage remind us that God does not make suggestions or proposals—He expects obedience. Yet, far too often we want to acknowledge Jesus as Savior without submitting to Him as Lord. By contrast, the immediate obedience of Philip is striking. He did not delay, question, or ask for greater detail. He simply got up and went.

- **What are some reasons we might struggle to obey the Lord's commands?**

We may not hear directly from an angel like Philip did, but we do hear directly from God through His Word. In Scripture, there are many things that are clear, including our call to share the gospel. When God calls us to share the gospel, He directs us to all kinds of people. For Philip, the gospel's destination was the heart of an Ethiopian eunuch who was an official in the court of his African queen. This is such a reminder that the gospel is meant for those with great influence as well as for the lowliest in society. It is applicable in both the rural countryside and the bustling city. God desires for the gospel to be carried to all people, and He's called us to be the ones to declare it.

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 80, DDG)

Preservation of Scripture

God has chosen to reveal Himself to humanity through the text of Scripture, having inspired it and ensured that it is free from error. God has also made sure throughout the course of history that the biblical text is faithfully preserved for future generations. Our belief in the preservation of Scripture is supported by investigation into how the canon of Scripture was formed and how manuscripts were faithfully transmitted throughout the centuries.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
The Holy Spirit leads us to proclaim the gospel so that others might be saved.

Acts 8

"Philip was so in touch with the Spirit that he was not only flexible as to how the Holy Spirit would lead, but as to where the Spirit would use him. And he was obedient. Put yourself in Philip's place. You are not one of the Twelve or the Big Three, but you really have something going in the Samaritan crusade. Simon the magician has been defeated. The entire town thinks your message is God's truth and knows you are from God. It is a happy time—a marvelous revival, and suddenly the Lord tells you to take a hike to, of all places, the desert! Philip went from an exciting city and a growing congregation to a lonely desert road and a congregation of one. It would have been so easy to be discouraged. 'Lord, do you really want me to go to the desert? There is nothing there but lizards. Have I not proved myself worthy of a broader ministry? I have been faithful in the small things—I even waited on the widows. And now the desert? Lord . . .!' But that is not how Philip responded. He was ready to serve anywhere anytime. This is a great example to emulate. ... From ground level we see the role of human obedience. Would the eunuch have been saved even if Philip had disobeyed? The question is irrelevant. God chooses to use human obedience to carry out his plan. Exactly whom he uses or how is incidental. As Lloyd Ogilvie says, 'The Lord of all creation has ordained that he would do his work through us. Our seeking the Spirit's guidance and obeying what he wants us to do and say is the way he works to bless the world.' God's sovereign work plus man's obedience brings the touch of God to needy human lives. Put another way, there are all kinds of "chance" meetings ready to take place in a life that is sensitive and obedient to God's leading."[1]

In Defense (p. 82, DDG)

We may hear people say things like, "God doesn't need us to accomplish His purposes, but He chooses to use us anyway." Some take this idea so far as to say that God will accomplish His purposes no matter what we do. In a certain sense, these both are true. However, we need to understand that He has chosen to use His people to reflect His nature and declare His message. For lost people to be saved, they must hear the message of the gospel, believing it in a way that transforms their lives. For people to know Jesus and to hear the gospel, God's people must declare it. God has called all of His people—that's you and me—to carry out Jesus' mission of declaring the gospel to the nations (Rom. 10).

TEACHING PLAN

Read Acts 8:30-35.

While the eunuch was sitting in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah, but he struggled to understand its meaning. God was already at work before Philip came to the chariot—the Lord was softening the heart of this eunuch through His Word even as He was sending Philip to speak the gospel to him. When we obey God's command to evangelize, we will discover that God has already arranged the circumstances. The results aren't up to us—but the choice to obey is. God is at work. Therefore, we should move with urgency to share the gospel.

Philip wanted to know if the eunuch understood what he was reading in Isaiah about the Suffering Servant (Isa. 53:7-8). The eunuch's answer reflects the universal condition of all humanity: How is the world to understand the meaning of the Scriptures without guidance? In his response, Philip demonstrated what it means to be a faithful witness with the Scriptures. Evangelism is not merely an explanation of the text but the proclamation of Jesus Christ about whom all the Scriptures speak.

Every book of the Bible points to Jesus. We don't have to force Christ into the narrative of Scripture—He is already there. It is our responsibility to help others see how Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises and the only way to be saved.

- **How have you witnessed God preparing the heart of someone to hear and believe the gospel?**

Read Acts 8:36-40.

As Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch approached water, the new believer asked to be baptized. There is nothing supernatural or magical about the water—baptism is an act of obedience to Jesus' command, and serves as a testimony to the world that identify with Jesus. The gospel message demands a response of allegiance. Baptism must be our response. Another is proclaiming the gospel to the world.

- **How is baptism a response of allegiance to Christ?**

Jesus died on the cross to save sinners, just as the Scriptures foretold. As we live in wholehearted obedience to Jesus, declaring the truth of the gospel, many will hear, some will believe, and God will receive the glory He deserves.

- **Why is sharing the gospel a matter of obedience?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
The Holy Spirit leads us to proclaim the gospel so that others might be saved.

Acts 8

8:35 "Verse 37 … is not found in the early manuscripts of Acts and seems to be a later scribal addition. It is given in a footnote [in many translations] and consists of a profession of faith on the part of the eunuch. Evidently a scribe felt this was lacking and so provided the missing confession of faith. He did not need to do so. Luke had summarized Philip's sharing the gospel with the eunuch in v. 35, and one can assume it included an appeal for the eunuch to respond. The eunuch's desire for baptism would indicate a favorable response to Philip's appeal. The added verse, however, has considerable value. It seems to embody a very early Christian baptismal confession where the one baptizing asked the candidate if he believed in Christ with all his heart, to which the candidate would respond by confessing Jesus Christ as the Son of God."[2]

Activity

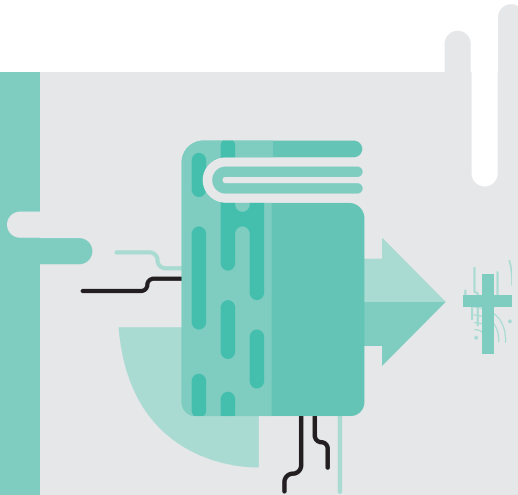
Give each of your students a sheet of paper and a writing utensil. Their job is to create a diagram of the three points from today's lesson to help them remember how to proclaim Jesus. This diagram should be an easy-to-remember, easy-to-follow illustration from some parallel situation.

An example might be a diagram that shows football plays. The players follow the coach just like we follow the Spirit. They execute certain plays to advance the ball just like we explain the Scriptures to show Jesus. Finally, they try to get the ball to the end zone just like we encourage commitment to Christ.

Give students time to consider their parallel illustrations and then let them show their diagrams. Ask them how they can make these steps happen with someone in their lives this week.

(p. 81, DDG) Christ Connection

The Ethiopian eunuch was familiar with the Old Testament prophets but was unable to understand how their message was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Philip was led by the Holy Spirit to help the eunuch understand how Jesus died on the cross for our sins and was raised from the dead, in accordance with the ancient prophecies.



PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL

The Holy Spirit leads us to proclaim the gospel so that others might be saved.

JESUS CONNECTION

The Ethiopian eunuch was familiar with the Old Testament prophets but didn't yet know that their message was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Philip was led by the Holy Spirit to help the eunuch understand how Jesus died on the cross for our sins and was raised from the dead, just as the prophets predicted.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

ATTENTIVENESS – Choosing to listen and pay attention to others.

HEAD

What directions did the Holy Spirit give Philip?

How did the eunuch respond to Philip and the good news of Jesus?

HEART

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to help remind us of Jesus' words, convict us of sin and prompt us to live God's way. How can we listen carefully to God's Spirit?

How does what we find most important (interests, people, values, etc.) influence how attentive we are to God or others?

HANDS

The next time someone talks with you, choose to listen attentively by going through the following steps:

1. Stop what you are doing
2. Use attentive body language (e.g., make eye contact, face them, lean in to hear better, nod, use appropriate facial expressions)
3. Don't interrupt or finish the person's sentence. Remember that their thoughts and feelings are just as important as yours.
4. Try to understand the other person's point of view. Ask questions to make sure you understand their thoughts or repeat what they're saying with different words.